

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3022

C O N F I D E N T I A L CANBERRA 2308

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP (SHULTZ AND WEINBERGER)

SUBJECT: US VISITS TO AUSTRALIA

REFS: (A) STATE 75644; (B) CANBERRA 2234; (C) CANBERRA 2270;
(D) STATE 78507; (E) CANBERRA 2299

1. HAVING REVIEWED REFTELS UPON MY RETURN APRIL 19 FROM PAPUA NEW GUINEA, I CONCLUDE THAT DECISION TO CANCEL SECRETARY SCHULTZ' VISIT HERE WAS EMINENTLY SOUND AND THAT IT NOW PROBABLY DESIRABLE ON BALANCE TO POSTPONE SECRETARY WEINBERGER'S VISIT TO SOMETIME IN POST-ELECTION PERIOD.

2. LATTER DECISION IS A CLOSE ONE. SINCE WE HAVE ALREADY NOTIFIED AUSTRALIAN-AMERICAN ASSOCIATION AS WELL AS GOA OF POSTPONEMENT AND SINCE AAA REACTED WITH EQUANIMITY AS DID PRIMIN'S OFFICE (SIR JOHN BUNTING), I THINK WE SHOULD LET OUR DECISION STAND. THERE IS THE ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATION THAT POSTPONEMENT OF SECRETARY WEINBERGER'S VISIT MIGHT HELP SET THE STAGE FOR DE-EMPHASIZING CORAL SEA CELEBRATIONS FOR REASONS STATED REFTEL B.

3. FINALLY AND PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANTLY, POSTPONEMENT OF SECRETARY'S VISIT WOULD AVOID RISKS THAT ANY STATEMENTS MADE BY SECRETARY DURING ELECTION PERIOD COULD BE DISTORTED TO ANY POLITICAL PARTY'S ADVANTAGE. FOR EXAMPLE, SECRETARY WOULD HAVE TO SAY THAT WHICH WAS
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GRACIOUS AND PALATABLE WITH REGARD TO THE GENERAL STATE

OF AUSTRALIAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS. THIS COULD REDOUND
TO THE ADVANTAGE OF THE LABOR GOVERNMENT AT A TIME WHEN

THE OPPOSITION IS LIKELY TO CRITICIZE THE GOVERNMENT
FOR ITS FAILURE TO DO RIGHT BY AUSTRALIA'S LONG-TIME
BEST FRIEND AND PROTECTOR, THE UNITED STATES. IT COULD
WELL BE THAT FONMIN WILLESEE, ASTUTE POLITICAN THAT HE IS,
RECOGNIZED THIS LATTER POINT IN URGING US TO GO FORWARD
WITH THE SECRETARY'S VISIT DURING THE ELECTION PERIOD.

4. WE HAVE MADE IT CLEAR TO THE FONOFF THAT POSTPONEMENT
OF THE VISIT HAS NO POLITICAL CONNOTATIONS WHATSOEVER,
BUT THERE MAY BE SOME LINGERING DOUBTS THAT OUR DECISION
MIGHT REFLECT SOME DISSATISFACTION OVER, FOR EXAMPLE,
PRIMIN'S STATEMENT IN PARLIAMENT WITH REGARD TO NOT
RENEWING CURRENT AGREEMENTS ON US INSTALLATIONS WHEN THOSE
AGREEMENTS EXPIRE. DEFMIN BARNARD'S SUBSEQUENT CLARIFICA-
TION WAS LESS THAN SATISFACTORY. IF THERE ARE SUCH GOA
APPREHENSIONS OVER US REACTIONS, WE SHOULD NOT ALLAY THEM.

5. I SUGGEST THAT DEPARTMENT TAKE THE POSITION THAT, MUCH
AS WE APPRECIATE GOA'S REASONS FOR PROCEEDING WITH
ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED VISIT, WE STILL CONSIDER THAT VISIT SHOULD
BE POSTPONED. THIS WOULD ALSO HAVE ADVANTAGE OF ALLOWING
SECRETARY WEINBERGER TO HAVE TALKS IN CANBERRA WITH HIS
MINISTERIAL OPPOSITES, INCLUDING HOPEFULLY THE PRIMIN, AT
A TIME WHEN THE MINISTERS WOULD NOT BE SO DEEPLY PREOCCUPIED

WITH AN ELECTION CAMPAIGN. PLEASE MAKE NO REFERENCE TO
THESE RECOMMENDATIONS OF MINE IN TALKING TO
AMBASSADOR SHAW.
GREEN

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